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NAME OF INVENTORS: BERTRAM GECK
20771 RAMITA TRAIL
BOCA RATON, FL 33433

FRANCISCO OLYMPIO MARCON DA ROCHA
21246 VIA EDEN
BOCA RATON, FL 33433

ROBINSON OSMAR LIMA
20844 DEL LUNA DRIVE
BOCA RATON, FL 33433

LUIS CESAR ZANILO
425 ASHWOOD PLACE
BOCA RATON, FL 33431

ENOCH RAGIN, JR.
9842 LIBERTY COURT
BOCA RATON, FL 33434

TITLE OF INVENTION: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR INHIBITING
FEATURES FOR WIRELESS TERMINALS

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, THE FOLLOWING IS
A SPECIFICATION OF THE AFORESAID INVENTION

TITLE

System and Method for Inhibiting Features for Wireless Terminals

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION5 **Field of the Invention**

The present invention relates to wireless services. More particularly, the present invention relates to determining and implementing rules for one or more base stations of a wireless service.

Description of Related Art

10 In a wireless network, terminals, such as telephones, are generally connected wirelessly to a given base station at any given moment. In a typical system, an idle terminal receives signals from one or more base stations in the vicinity. If there is more than one signal present, the terminal analyzes the signals and connects itself to the base station associated with the strongest signal. If there
15 is an incoming communication being directed to a specific terminal, a signal is sent from the connected base station to activate the terminal. The type of activation is often defined by the user; for example, the user may program a terminal to ring at a particular volume, or to vibrate instead.

20 Known wireless systems may offer additional options to users, such as the ability to program voice mail and e-mail features, with or without a temporal limit. For example, a user may choose to direct all voice calls directly to voice mail, whether the terminal is in range of a base station or not. A user may desire to forward calls, either without ringing the terminal or after a predetermined number of rings, to another phone number. Additionally, a user may wish to allow only e-
25 mails and/or SMS messages to activate the terminal, so that during a meeting the user is not disturbed by callers. On the other hand, a user may wish to forward e-mails, especially those over a given size, to another e-mail account. Of course, some wireless systems provide combinations of these options and more.

30 In the known wireless systems, it is usually up to the user to define the rules governing the reaction of the terminal to an incoming call or message. Although a network administrator may have control over some rules, such as whether incoming calls activate terminals, such control is often limited. For example, the network administrator might only be able to control the reaction of terminals to all incoming calls, but not be able to distinguish between calls

emanating from a particular location or exchange and other calls. Even if an administrator's actions can define the parameters of terminal activation when the terminal is within a geographical location, the administrator might not have any control over outgoing calls.

Some known systems can determine the location of terminals with varying degrees of precision and accuracy, for example the systems disclosed by U.S. Patent No. 5,608,723 to Felsenstein for "Methods and Systems for Secure Wireless Communication Within a Predetermined Boundary", U.S. Patent No. 5,666,662 to Shibuya for a "Method for Detecting the Location of a Mobile Terminal", U.S. Patent No. 5,778,304 to Grube et al. for a "Method for Providing Communication Services Based on Geographical Location", and U.S. Patent No. 6,091,959 to Souissi et al. for a "Method and Apparatus in a Two-Way Wireless Communication System For Location-Based Message Transmission". Many systems that determine the location of terminals are costly to implement, though the ability to determine whether or not a terminal is inside a pre-defined and predetermined area of space at a given time may help in setting the rules governing that terminal.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is therefore an object of the invention to provide a system and method for implementing special rules for a base station of a wireless service.

It is another object of the invention to provide a system and method for defining rules for a terminal situated within a particular area.

It is yet another object of the invention to provide a system and method for reducing disturbances in an environment due to ringing terminals.

It is yet another object of the invention to provide a system and method providing an environment in which the use of terminals for making outgoing calls is limited.

The invention determines special rules for a base station of a wireless service. For example, a base station that is inside a meeting room can be governed by rules that restrict terminals wirelessly connected to it from ringing.

The administrator of the wireless network can program a database in the system with the rules. When communications, such as calls or text messages, are directed to a terminal, the system accesses the database. Based on information in

the database, the system will take a predefined action, for example ring the terminal or forward a caller to voice mail.

The administrator may have control over the rights of each terminal based on its location. A database may be programmed with restrictions on base stations and/or specific terminals.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is an example of a base station in a room with several terminals.

Fig. 2 is a diagram of a computer system on which a database may reside and be modified.

Fig. 3 is a flow chart showing a preferred embodiment for a process of determining what rules and/or restrictions to apply when there is an incoming call.

Fig. 4 is a flow chart showing a preferred embodiment for a process of determining what rules and/or restrictions to apply when there is an outgoing call.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A wireless system utilizes rules to determine a course of action related to communication with a wireless terminal within a wireless network or portion thereof.

With reference to Fig. 1, base station 1 in room 20 is shown. Terminals 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, such as wireless telephones carried by users in a preferred embodiment, are present inside room 20. Terminals 40, 42 are present outside of room 20.

In a preferred embodiment, a network administrator has access to a database (not shown) that contains representations of rules for base stations, including base stations 1 - 5, and representations of rules for terminals 30 - 42.

The network administrator may alter the database in order to modify the rules. For example, before the rules are defined, there are no restrictions. All the terminals are free to make calls and to receive calls, and to ring at any volume upon receiving a call. Once the rules are modified, restrictions may be put in place to define what is allowed.

For example, in a preferred embodiment, the database has rules restricting only base station 1, which governs room 20, and the reception of calls by terminals 30 - 42. Table 1 shows an example of some simple rules.

Base Station or Terminal	Rule
Base Station 1	Only priority 1 terminals may ring in room; priority 3 terminals may not receive calls
Terminal 30	Priority 3
Terminal 32	Priority 3
Terminal 34	Priority 1
Terminal 36	Priority 3
Terminal 38	Priority 2
Terminal 40	Priority 1
Terminal 42	Priority 3

TABLE 1

5 Based on the rules shown in Table 1, of the terminals inside room 20, only terminals 34 and 38 may be activated by base station 1 to receive calls. If a call is made to terminal 34, terminal 34 will ring or vibrate, according to the user setting. If a call is made to terminal 38, terminal 38 may only vibrate, but not ring. Based on the rules shown in Table 1, if a call is made to terminal 40, terminal 40 is activated as long as it is in range of one of the base stations.

10 Based on the rules shown in Table 1, terminal 42 may or may not be activated based on which preferred embodiment is implemented. In a preferred embodiment, in order to save costs the system is not designed to determine whether terminal 42 is inside room 20, and if terminal 42 is close enough to base station 1 it will be treated as if it were inside room 20, and not be activated. Thus, even if the rules do not depend on the location of terminal 42, the activation of terminal 42 does depend on whether it is wirelessly connected to base station 1.

15 In an alternative preferred embodiment, shielding exists substantially around the perimeter of room 20 to prevent a connection between terminal 42 and base station 1, so that the rules of base station 1 do not apply to terminal 42.

20 In yet another preferred embodiment, the system is more sophisticated and detects the location of terminal 42 relative to room 20, and determines that since it is outside room 20 the restrictions of base station 1 do not apply.

Table 2 shows an example of a database containing rules for base stations but none for terminals.

Base Station	Rule
Base Station 1	terminals may not ring, but may vibrate
Base Station 2	terminals may not ring/vibrate (text messages only)
Base Station 3	no external outgoing calls allowed
Base Station 4	no incoming calls allowed between 9pm and 6am
Base Station 5	no restrictions

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TABLE 2

Based on the rules shown in Table 2, base stations 1 - 5 are given different rules. For example, terminals connected to base station 1 may vibrate but not ring. Such a restriction is desirable, for example, where it is important that a meeting not be disturbed by ringing phones, yet it is also important that the participants of the meeting remain reachable through their terminals.

Terminals connected to base station 2 may not vibrate or ring. This restriction may be desirable when it is important that participants in a meeting are not distracted by ringing or vibrating terminals, but it is also important that the participants can check text messages.

Those terminals that are connected to base station 3 may receive calls, but may not make external outgoing calls. This restriction may be desirable to prevent employees at a particular location from making personal calls.

Terminals connected to base station 4 may receive incoming calls only during certain hours. This restriction may be desirable in a home office, for example, to ensure that terminals connected to base station 4 are not activated when individuals are likely to be asleep.

Finally, terminals connected to base station 5 are not restricted in any way.

With reference to Fig. 2, a diagram of a computer system on which the invention may be implemented is shown. Computer 210 is attached to input device 220, which may be, for example, a keyboard and/or mouse. Computer 210 is also

attached to an output device 230, which may be, for example, a monitor. In a preferred embodiment, a database (not shown) resides on computer-readable media 240 (such as a hard drive). Software that is used to modify the database may also reside on media 240, or may reside on separate media, and contains instructions 5 that are executed by CPU 250.

With reference to Fig. 3, a preferred embodiment for processing incoming communications 300 is shown. When an incoming communication is received, a determination 320 is made as to which terminal is desired. A determination 330 is made as to whether there is a base station connected to the terminal. If no base 10 station is connected, the system proceeds as if the terminal is off or out of range 340. If a base station is connected, rules from the database for the applicable base station are accessed 350, and rules from the database for the applicable terminal are accessed 360. Based on the retrieved rules, the system takes an action 370. The action 370 may be, by way of example, causing the desired terminal to ring, 15 causing the desired terminal to vibrate, or directing the communication to a messaging system.

Alternative preferred embodiments exist for handling incoming communications. For example, accessing 350 base station rules and accessing 360 terminal rules may occur in a different order or even simultaneously, or accessing 20 360 terminal rules may be skipped if terminal rules do not exist. In a preferred embodiment an emergency incoming communication can override any restrictions that are in place.

With reference to Fig. 4, a preferred embodiment for processing outgoing communications 400 is shown. A base station receives 410 a signal associated 25 with a request to make an outgoing communication from a connected terminal. Rules from the database for the applicable terminal are accessed 420 and rules from the database for the applicable base station are accessed 430. A determination 440 is made as to whether the communication is allowed to go through. If the communication is allowed to go through, the system proceeds 450 with the activation of the terminal and communication (in a preferred embodiment, there may be, depending on the rules, a restriction such as only vibration but no ringing allowed upon activation, for example). If the communication is not 30 allowed to go through, the terminal is informed 460 that the communication may not go through.

Alternative preferred embodiments exist for processing outgoing communications. For example, accessing 420 terminal rules and accessing 430 base station rules may occur in a different order or even simultaneously, or accessing 420 terminal rules may be skipped if terminal rules do not exist. In a 5 preferred embodiment an emergency outgoing communication can override any restrictions that are in place.

The above preferred embodiments can be implemented in various wireless networks, such as voice, video, data, encrypted information, and so on. Actions 10 may be taken based on rules related to specific terminals, specific base station, or the type of desired communication (such as whether there is an emergency, whether the desired communication is external, etc.), or the format of desired communication (whether the desired communication is voice, data, video, etc.), or a combination thereof. In a preferred embodiment, the system as described above is implemented in the HiPath™ wireless system provided by Siemens Corp.

15 While the invention has been described in terms of preferred embodiments, those skilled in the art will recognize that the invention can be practiced with modification within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.